

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN

ST. JAMES' CHURCH,

WILMINGTON. N. C.,

AT THE INTERMENT OF

DR. THOMAS H. WRIGHT,

Monday, September 23d, 1861,

BY

REV. ROBERT B. DRANE, D. D.,

RECTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

Printed at the Request of the Family.

WILMINGTON, N. C.,
FULTON & PRICE, STEAM POWER PRESS PRINTERS.
1861.

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TO THE MEMORY

OF AN ENDEARED FRIEND, WHOSE MEMORY
WILL NEVER PASS AWAY FROM THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO LOVED HIM,
THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS IS DEDICATED,
BY THE AUTHOR

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ADDRESS.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND BRETHREN:

The dispensation of Providence which brings us here to-day is calculated to arouse in our bosoms emotions of no ordinary character. A father in our Israel has fallen. We behold his earthly tabernacle before us in ruins. The pure, heaven-born spirit, which so lately inhabited it, has gone to Him who gave it—has gone to *his* Father and *our* Father—to *his* God and *our* God, in whose holy keeping it shall remain, in a state of separation from its tenement of clay, till the heavens be no more. Hither the blessed light of the Sun of Righteousness enables us, with the eye of faith, to follow it in joy and triumph. And this is our consolation in contemplating the exit of our friends from this scene of sorrow and sin—*this* is our consolation, that the soul, on its departure from the body, does not perish. Death, when it has dissolved the union between them, and mingled the body with the dust, has done all that is in his power. The soul, secure in her immortality, and shielded by the wing of Omnipotence, bids defiance to his assaults. No, the soul cannot die. Upon its every power, and faculty, and affection, is impressed the seal of eternity. It is destined, revelation assures us, by the decree of its Maker, to exist forever. And who can resist His will? Who can frustrate His purposes? It is destined too, we are assured, upon the same unquestionable authority, to exist forever, on being suitably prepared for it here, in a state of most exalted bliss and glory; such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.” Nor is this

happiness to be the portion of the soul only. The body, though now embraced by corruption, and covered by dishonor, shall soon be delivered from its bondage, put on glorious apparel, and, reunited with the soul, be made partaker of its felicity and immortality. Yes, brethren, short shall be the triumph of death even over this corruptible body. The decree has gone forth from Him who first formed it from nothing, and who has the "keys of hell and death," that this "corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality." "The hour," he proclaimeth, "the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord, "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." To this an inspired Apostle has added: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory." "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." And what else, brethren, can we need to dispel our fears, to sustain our hopes, and to comfort our hearts, in view of the ravages of death, than these blessed assurances, that the soul is above his power, and shall, if purified by repentance and sanctified by the Spirit of the Redeemer, be ere long united again to the body, to receive with it "its perfect consummation and bliss in God's eternal and everlasting glory." And with what confidence may we not hope that this blessedness shall be the portion of our departed brother? He lived the life, he died the death, and, therefore, shall undoubtedly partake of the everlasting happiness of the righteous.

In common instances of mortality, to notice with any degree of

particularity, the personal character of the deceased is (as you are aware, my brethren,) foreign to my practice; and such notices may in general, it is apprehended, be justly suspected of flattery to the living. But in the present instance I should violate your feelings, do injustice to my own, and neglect a sacred duty to religion, were I not to attempt some commemoration of the virtues of him whom we have lost. And in proceeding to discharge this office, my apprehension is, that I shall incur your censure, not for saying *too much*, but for omitting *much* that *should be* said;—for memory, which, when prompted by affection, loves to linger in the contemplation of departed excellence, will point you to very many traits deserving a distinct notice, which it is impossible to embrace in the hasty and imperfect sketch which I am about to give of his character.*

The last and most enduring recollections which are left upon my mind of him whom we have lost, are of his expressions of deep religious feeling, and of those strong but humble hopes which are now changed to certainty. These recollections connect themselves at once with all that I know of his character and life. Dr. Wright was a religious man in the high and true sense of the words; and to say that one is truly a religious man, is to say that he comprehends and feels those relations by which, and by which alone, our nature is ennobled; that all which is most glorious and exalting in our conceptions of infinity and eternity has become to him a matter of habitual belief; that he knows himself to be the creature of God, holding a rank in the universe immeasurably higher than

* Dr. Thomas H. Wright was born on the 17th of January, 1800, in the town of Wilmington, where he resided during his entire life. When prepared for College he entered the University of North Carolina, and graduated there in 1820. After his graduation he studied medicine and practised his profession for several years, but not finding it congenial with his tastes it was abandoned. In January, 1842, he was elected Cashier of the Bank of Cape Fear, which office he held until May, 1847, when he was made President of that institution, and continued to occupy that position to the period of his death, which occurred 21st September, 1861.

what the mere man of this world can imagine, and that he is under the uniform control of expectations and motives, the tendency of which is to raise him above all vulgar and selfish feelings, and to invigorate all that are pure and generous. The religion of him whom we mourn was not of that spurious kind which borrows its heat from the meaner passions. They furnished no fuel for its support. It burnt clear and steadily upon the altar of his heart, and the temple within was filled with its fragrance. His religion was the controlling principle of his life. It manifested itself as it always does when it thoroughly pervades and forms the character, not in artificial exhibitions for the view of mankind, not unseasonably and impertinently, but in that natural recurrence to its motives and sanctions, which appears whenever the occasion demands it, in the conduct and conversation of sincere and devout disciples of Christ. He was baptized in infancy at the altar of this Parish, and is believed to have been early religiously impressed. In the opening years of maturing manhood he made here a profession of his christian faith; and how strong were the ties which bound him to this church of his fathers—how zealous he was for its honor, its peace and its prosperity, and how ready to aid in every good work in which it engaged, is fully known and justly appreciated by you. It is, in my apprehension, no exaggeration to say, that but for his wise counsels, his munificence, his untiring energy and perseverance, coming in aid of your own, the two sacred edifices which have been erected in this town for the use of our communion since I commenced my ministry among you, would never have been reared. As a Vestryman and Warden of this Parish, and for many years its chief financial agent, no man could have been more untiring or more efficient in the discharge of his duties; while his services in the Diocesan and general Conventions of the Church, and as a member of her Board of Missions, made him always a welcome

and highly valued member of those bodies. O, may the remembrance of his love for the Church, and his zeal to advance her interests, while it awakens our gratitude, stimulate us to imitate his example.

All the institutions of religion commanded the highest esteem and reverence of our departed friend. He loved the house, he loved the people, he loved the ministers of God. Regarding the public ordinances of the Gospel as divinely appointed means of salvation, and sensible, from experience, of their holy efficacy, he felt it to be his happiness, no less than his duty to encourage, and as often as he had opportunity, to unite in their celebration.

The worship of the Church in particular afforded him the highest satisfaction; and never (he has been heard to say) did his spirit know such heavenly peace and serenity as when prostrate in this sacred temple he poured forth his devout emotions in the animating strains of our admirable Liturgy.

His *charity* was as sincere and ardent as his piety. Though firmly attached to the distinctive principles of our Communion, from a deliberate conviction that they are primitive and scriptural, yet, kindly overlooking what he deemed the errors of others, he cordially embraced in the arms of affection the christian of every name, in whose temper and conduct he found the image of his Redeemer,

The same benign principle inspired him with universal good will, and excited in his bosom a lively concern for the welfare of mankind. Every benevolent object found his heart alive to its interests, and his hand open to further its advancement. He was emphatically a man of active beneficence and usefulness. Though he felt, in all their strength and tenderness, the ties of domestic life, he did not confine his sympathies within the narrow circle of family and kindred. He was public spirited in his beneficence, and his public spirit had its foundation in christian faith and charity. It

had the steadiness of principle and the warmth of impulse. Bought with a price, he felt that nothing which he possessed—neither his time, nor his talents, nor his wealth were his own, but might justly be claimed by Him through whose precious blood he had redemption. In the use of them, therefore, it was his aim to act as the steward of the Great Giver,—and hence there was no good cause, no holy and benevolent enterprise by which suffering could be relieved, and misfortune alleviated, and human hearts made virtuous and happy, which he was not ready to aid.

In whatever point of light the character of our departed friend is viewed, we shall see much to admire, to commend and to imitate. Though in his deportment and manners he had all the gentleness of a woman, he was yet a man of marked decision and energy of character. At the same time he was far removed from the obstinacy of the self-opinionated. If his quickness of thought and feeling sometimes led him to a hasty opinion or judgment, he was ever open to conviction; ready to hear with respectful consideration whatever could be presented on the other side; and instances are not wanting in the experience of individuals, in which, with that genuine consistency which seeks only light and truth, and that humility which exalts and dignifies the character it adorns, he has changed his opinions at the counsel, or the suggestion of others.—Rarely, however, was there occasion for this. With a mind of more than ordinary power, and an enlightened and firmly established moral principle to guide its rapid and vigorous action, his judgment almost instinctively embraced the noble and generous side of every question; while his freedom from everything like guile, his honesty in the formation and his manly independence in the expression of his opinions, gave him no small share of influence with this community in all matters of public interest and importance.

I believe if those who knew him best were called upon to men-

tion any one virtue by which he was particularly distinguished, they would unite in naming *integrity*. Dr. Wright was a man who, if any ever could, might have told the world his motives and have risen in their respect. If you were to determine whether he would pursue any particular course of conduct, or aim at any particular object, you had only to determine whether he would think that object right, or that course of conduct his duty, and you were sure that no selfish or mean passion, and no sinister purpose would interfere to lead insensibly his judgment astray. You knew and felt that you could rely in perfect security upon his truth, his sincerity and openness. There were no false appearances about him. He had nothing of that disguise and cunning which is sometimes mistaken for policy. His conduct lay before you in the broad daylight, and you never were at a loss for his motives, and you never perceived any but what were honorable. I know the force of the language I am using. It is the last occasion on which I should suffer myself to indulge in idle and unfounded praise. It is an occasion, to me, far too solemn and painful. I speak of my departed friend with the truth, which I know he loved. If it were possible I should not, his image, which is continually recurring to me, would bring admonition and shame along with it.

Yet, with all the virtues that I have named, and all the good works that adorned his life, I am persuaded that *humility* was the crowning disposition of his soul. Every claim on account of personal merit which presumption could assert, or vanity urge, he surrendered at the foot of the cross. All his efforts to promote the honor of God and the welfare of men he considered as required by his duty, and even after all, he felt that he was an unprofitable servant. Hence his whole hope, not only for reward but for acceptance with God, was reposed entirely and exclusively upon the merits of the Redeemer, apprehended by a firm but humble faith. To

this he clung with all the powers of his soul, which perpetually breathed the self-abasing sentiment: "Not unto me—not unto me, O Lord, but unto thy name be all the glory." This self-abasement was the result, not simply of a consciousness that his services were imperfect, and would not, though they were free from defect, be of any value in the sight of God, but of a deep sense of unworthiness, a strong and lively conviction of the utter corruption of our nature, and consequently that every thing that was good, either in his heart or life, was the fruit of God's powerful grace. Abundant indeed was his life in that blessed fruit. And as a consequence, the religion which had been his guide through life, did not fail him as a support and consolation in the hour of death. Many wearisome days and nights had been appointed him; but through all he bowed in quiet and calm submission to the will of God; and when the final hour came, and nature sank under the power of disease and infirmity, he fell asleep in Jesus, in the hope of a blessed immortality.

“ His spirit with a bound,
Left its incumbering clay;
His tent at sunrise on the ground,
A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease;
And life's stern warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.

Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be thy new employ,
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Savior's joy!"

Brethren, as the life and character of such a man are a blessing and benefit to the community, his death is felt to be a common loss. We presume not in these public services to enter the sacred enclosure of private and domestic sorrow, farther than to express, as I am confident I may, in your behalf and my own, our deep and ten-

der sympathy with those who have lost a husband, a father, a brother, and an endeared relation. For ourselves, we mourn the loss of a valued friend and fellow worshipper. We grieve that his venerable form will no more be seen in this sacred temple, or his words of counsel be heard in our assemblies. Let his death, my friends, speak to our consciences of duty and of preparation. Who of us will not listen to the silent and impressive lesson before us. It will be in vain for us to contemplate such a character as we have been now regarding, if we do not feel that its foundation was in that religion which teaches every one of us to regard himself as created by God to be an image of his own eternity. It will be in vain for us to stand by the grave of departed worth, if no earthly passion grows cool, and no holy purpose gains strength. Prepare to follow and meet thy God, is the voice of Providence in death to every surviving relative and friend. Let us, then, lay to heart the lessons of this solemn occasion, and let them stimulate us in our work of preparation for the eternity that awaits us. To be happy in that eternity is all that is worthy of the ardor of our immortal souls. Nothing that is greatly valuable is to be found here. The true and durable riches must be sought for in the paths of piety and virtue, and secured in the regions above. To those regions then let us transfer our treasures, that our hearts may be there also. Thus we shall be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Our lives will be those of the righteous. The footprints of utility will mark the way that we have traveled. And when we die—as in the case of our departed brother—“there shall be tears on the cheek of innocence, and sighs from the bosom of virtue; the young shall wish to resemble, and the old shall lament us,” and He, who is the judge of the quick and the dead, shall receive us into his heavenly mansions. Which, may God grant to us all, for His sake who died for us all, Jesus Christ our Lord.



Date Due
